

ECUADOR & GALAPAGOS ISLANDS

01 May – 15 May 23

14 Nights/ 15 Days

Daily programme:

Day 1: 01 May 23, Mon : Arrive Quito

You will be met upon arrival Quito Airport and transferred to your hotel.

Distance from airport to the hotel approximately one hour.

Hotel check in and rest of the day free.

Overnight Quito

Day 2 : 02 May 23, Tue : Quito Colonial Walking Excursion

Breakfast at the hotel, followed by a walking tour of the Old Colonial side of Quito.

Visit the Independence square and surroundings, Basilica del Voto Nacional, San Agustín and La Compañía Churches and Santo Domingo Church and Convent.

Quito's Historical Center, the largest and best preserved in Latin America, displays on its century's old narrow streets, plazas, churches, monasteries, and monuments a superb fusion of cultures and artistic styles which fascinates visitors and represents an unparalleled historic jewel.

Ecuador's capital, Quito, founded in 1534, sits high in the Andes at an altitude of 2.850m. Quito is a monumental city, built over the ruins of the Inca's northern imperial seat and a fabulous example of colonial architecture and art. Quito's centre is rich with 16th and 17th century churches and other buildings which blend traces of European, and Indigenous styles. For these reasons and the outstanding preservation of its rich legacy, UNESCO declared the entire centre of Quito a World Cultural Heritage site in 1978. It was the first city in the world to receive this qualification.

Surrounded by imposing mountains and volcanoes and an enviable scenery all around, Quito is just minutes away from the Line which marks our planet's Latitude 0.0'0", the Equator.

This half day sightseeing excursion offers the best of Quito with its rich cultural legacy, ornate facades, and dazzling gilt altars. Visit the Independence Square, The Archbishop's Palace, The Metropolitan Cathedral as well as other very representative samples of colonial art and architecture as the Santo Domingo Convent and San Agustin Convent as well as La Ronda Street, one of the oldest streets of the old Colonial Quito where will have the opportunity to visit a shop the spinning Yo-Yos are made.

The afternoon free to explore on your own.

Lunch is included today.

Overnight Quito

Day 3: 03 May 23, Wed: Quito – Papallacta – Misahualli

Breakfast at the hotel, check out , followed by a visit to the hot springs of Papallacta.

From there transfer to the Misahualli – eco-lodge.

After hotel check in an introductory walking excursion to the Amazon.

Early in the morning departure from Quito to Papallacta, located to the west of the city, known for its thermal waters and health benefits. After this visit, we continue the journey to Misahualli in the Ecuadorian Amazon. The trip offers incredible landscapes in the descent from the Andes towards the Selva, panoramic of an extensive forest that lodges many species of birds, ants, butterflies, and other species of the place.

Overnight in Casa del Suizo eco-lodge or similar

Meals included: Breakfast, lunch & dinner (meals do not include beverages)

Overnight Misahualli

Day 4: 04 May 23, Thu: Misahualli

Breakfast followed a full day exploring the Amazon, which will include:

Walking excursions, visits to Local Indigenous communities, boat rides on Amazon River

You start the day with an early breakfast. Walking through paths of primary and secondary forests, you can observe different species of birds and insects, as well as a great variety of trees and medicinal plants. The guides explain how plants are used not only in medicine, but also in construction and in the midst of local activities. Along the way, there are several opportunities to join the adventure factor, with hanging bridges and tree vines to swing.

Breakfast, lunch, and dinner included.

Overnight Misahualli

Day 5: 05 May 23, Fri: Misahualli – Puyo - Banos

Breakfast at the lodge and check out.

This morning travel from Misahualli to Baños, visiting the Orchids farm and Artisan centre of El Puyo. In the afternoon visit the Pailon del Diablo waterfall.

Early departure to travel from Misahualli to Puyo, a small typical town of the Amazonía where there is the possibility to learn how the local people of this town used to live before modernization reached this area as well as to visit "La Casa de la Balsa" where we can get a better grasp about the "balsa" a type of soft wood used to make various items and handicrafts very typical of this part of the country as well as an Orchid Garden where will be able to observe some of the most beautiful orchids, which some of them are in danger of extinction. We continue to Baños known for the large number of waterfalls located near it as well as for its unique landscape, surrounded by high mountains with sub-tropical vegetation which gives this town an usual and very nice, comfortable warm climate.

Upon arrival to Baños, we will head straight to visit one of the most impressive waterfalls of the area, the "Pailon del Diablo", in english the "Cauldron of the Devil". With approximately 100 feet high, this beautiful and impressive waterfall on the Rio Pastaza, which is a tributary of the upper Amazon River Basin, has three waterfalls which form an extraordinary whirlwind, with water temperatures of approximately 23 degrees centigrade. Walking towards the fall brings you through lush and green areas, where sometimes we can even catch a glimpse of some birds.

Later in the afternoon, hotel check in and rest of the day free.

Lunch is included today.

Overnight in Baños at selected hotel

Meals included: Breakfast, lunch (meals do not include beverages)

Day 6 : 06 May 23, Sat: Banos – Salasaca – Riobamba

Breakfast at the hotel and check out.

Early morning and after breakfast departure from Baños to Riobamba. Enroute visit the Artisan Center of the Salasaca, a community which its origin is Aymara from old Inca society. They arrived from Bolivia and made the highlands in Ecuador its home. At this community there is the possibility to learn about the hand-woven tapestries they make, featuring designs that depict different aspects of the live. The trip continues to visit a Mountain acclimatization base where you will learn about the tallest mountain in Ecuador, the Chimborazo, which at 6.268 m.a.s.l. due to its location near the equator, arguably is the farthest point from the earth's centre

Mid-afternoon arrival to Riobamba, located in the heart of the Andes and surrounded by 4 volcanos: Chimborazo, Altar, Carihuairazo and Tungurahua with an average temperature of 12 degrees Celsius. Riobamba's convenient location in the highlands between the coast and the jungle has made it an important crossroad in the development of Ecuador. It first was home to several indigenous communities before the arrival of the Inca empire. The town was an important outpost for the empire until the conquest of the Spanish in the sixteenth century. In fact, Riobamba was the first Spanish settlement in Ecuador, this was the first city founded by Spaniards in 1534. A brief visit of Riobamba before arrival to the selected hotel for the overnight provides with the opportunity to see some of the colonial buildings of this charming town.

Overnight in Riobamba, in a country inn of the area

Meals Included: Breakfast and lunch (meals do not include beverages)

Day 7: 07 May 23, Sun: Riobamba – Ingapirca – Cuenca**Breakfast at the hotel and check out.**

Drive to the Ingapirca Inca Ruins and then on to Cuenca.

Depart from Riobamba direction south. The route offers beautiful panoramic views of the highlands and a good opportunity to see the changes in the scenery of the highlands. Great opportunities to take pictures will be present in a couple of stops made during the route. Our first stop will be at Colta where we will visit the Balbanera church, which was constructed by the Spaniards in 1534, being the first Catholic church built in Ecuador. Then we will drive through what was the pre-Inca territory of the Cañari culture, until the Inca empire started its expansion into Ecuador. We will reach Ingapirca, a name given by the Incas, to the fortress and complex which are by far the most important archaeological sites left by the Inca Empire in Ecuadorian territory. The Temple of the Sun is by far the most significant building in the complex. It was constructed in the Inca way with careful consideration of their beliefs, being sun and moon worshipers, and their knowledge of the cosmos. The Temple built high in the mountains at an elevation of 3.200 m is positioned in such a way so that at the right moment of the day, the sunlight would shine through the centre of the doorway of the chamber at the top of the Temple.

Located around two hours from the city of Cuenca, the Ingapirca Complex offers a fascinating blend of the Cañari and Inca architecture and vestiges of their culture on a single site. Visit the onsite museum which includes numerous samples of ceramic, textiles and metal works found on diverse digs around the area of influence of these two cultures, an evident prove of the expert hands of this pre-Hispanic communities. Walk around the remains of this ancient facility, learning about the living practices of the ancient cultures. After this visit continue in direction to Cuenca, which is the third largest city in Ecuador and considered the jewel of the Southern highlands due to its beautiful colonial houses, convents, churches, and squares.

Overnight in Cuenca at selected hotel**Meals Included: Breakfast and lunch (meals do not include beverages)****Day 8: 08 May 23, Mon: Visit Cuenca & San Joaquin Valley (6 hours)**

In the morning visit San Joaquin Valley, located 7 kilometres west of the centre of Cuenca, characterized by its varied range of greens in the fertile patches of land sown with vegetables, flowers and fruits. Its territory encompasses river slopes such as the Yanuncay that irrigates the productive fields worked hard by its people for decades.

The artisan tradition of its inhabitants is manifested in the elaboration of basketry and other ornamental objects woven in vegetable fibres, this excursion includes a visit to its artisan centres where you can find decorative pieces as well as baskets of various sizes, colours and uses. San Joaquin is a small town with remote religious customs and celebrations with interesting displays of traditional elements such as costume presentations, folk dances, musical groups, and fireworks, among others.

Then return to Cuenca, the country's third largest in size and population and a main icon of the southern Andes. Cuenca has preserved its rich colonial past, beautifully shown on its narrow streets, white houses with flower-pot balconies, impressive churches, with their majestic domes and towers. Not far from each other we encounter convents, museums, plazas covered with flowers and monuments, all surrounded by the scenery of green hills, mountains, and the presence of four rivers that cross the city.

For all its beauty and well-preserved historical buildings, Cuenca was also declared a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage Site in 1999.

This is a walking tour in the colonial area of Cuenca to discover the beautiful churches and house facades; visit a few of the artisan centres where there is the opportunity to learn about the ceramic items, the famous Panama hat, gold and silver jewellery and embroidery which are some of the handicrafts for which Cuenca is also known.

Afternoon at leisure.

Overnight in Cuenca at selected hotel

Meals Included: Breakfast

Day 9: 09 May 23, Tue: Overland transfer from Cuenca to Guayaquil, Guayaquil city tour half day

After breakfast drive to Guayaquil. During this overland transfer, a journey of approximately 4 hours, the passengers will have the opportunity to enjoy beautiful panoramic views of the Southern Highlands as well as the drastic change in the climate and the vegetation. This change is especially noticeable when we start descending to the lowlands, where we will observe large plantations of banana, tropical fruits, and Cacao. Arrive to Guayaquil and check-in at the selected hotel.

Guayaquil, called by many the "Pearl of the Pacific", is the largest port in Ecuador. Founded in 1538, Guayaquil is now a dynamic cosmopolitan city, which offers what any major city on the world can.

At its origins it was an important port and ship-building location for the Spaniards and a target of English and French pirates. For these reasons Guayaquil offers a rich historical background with its wonderful museums, a handsome modern district with great shopping and delightful gastronomy.

Guayaquil is a prosperous city leading the economy of the country, which displays great pride.

Visit several historical places as Las Peñas, a neighbourhood established in 1915, which counts many houses with historical heritage full of brightly painted homes, cafes and its famous winding climb to the top of Santa Ana Hill. Stroll along the Riverfront or Malecon, the Moorish Tower and the famous Caraguay Fish market (morning visits only). Either way by car or on foot, Guayaquil offers great variety of sites and for that constitutes another great place to discover!

Overnight in Guayaquil at selected hotel

Meals Included: Breakfast and lunch (meals do not include beverages)

Day 10: 10 May 23, Wed: Guayaquil– The Galapagos Islands

Assistance and transfer in Guayaquil from the hotel to the airport to take the regular flight to the Galapagos Islands.

Upon arrival at Baltra airport and after complying with arrival procedures: Ingala Migration Card (TCT card) and payment of the Entrance fee to the Galapagos National Park you will be met outside of the arrival lounge by the Expeditions Tours representative to provide the transfer to Itabaca Channel (short ride of approximately 15 minutes). You will cross the channel by public ferry to Santa Cruz Island, where a car will be awaiting to take you to the highlands of Puerto Ayora Village to an Ecological Reserve, where you will be able to meet the giant tortoises in their natural habitat. After this visit will drive to hotel for check-in.

Overnight in Santa Cruz Island at selected hotel

Meals included: Breakfast

Day 11: 11 May 23, Thu: Days 11-12: Full day Navigation excursions – (day tour)

At the scheduled time passenger should be at the meeting point where the navigation excursion starts. Navigation will be offered to one of the following islands: **Isabela, or San Cristobal, or Bartolome, or Plazas, or North Seymour, or Santa Fe or Pinzon.**

****Navigation tour is provided on sharing basis and do not include transfers to/from hotel to dock or meeting point, due that distances are very short (5-8 minutes far away from the hotel). Our guide will contact passengers the night before to give you details and times for next day's excursion. If you require a transfer, please request it at an additional cost.***

GALAPAGOS ISLANDS – GENERAL INFORMATION

BARTOLOME (BARTHOLOMEW) ISLAND

Famous for its Pinnacle Rock, which is one of the most representative geological and photogenic landmarks of the Galapagos and home of a colony of the Galapagos Penguins, one of the smallest species of penguin in the world and the only one found north of the Equator. The visit to Bartolome includes a climb to the highest point of the island for spectacular views of the surrounding lava scenery, an area often referred as the Galapagos “moonscape”

ISABELA ISLAND

Located to the west side of the Galapagos Islands, Isabela is the largest island of the Archipelago, the visit to this fascinating island includes either Concha Perla Bay or Tintoreras Islet (according to availability at the moment of confirmation of program), the Interpretation Center and Flamingo’s Lagoon.

(Note: this visit includes transfers to and from Isabela Island on board public boats; the boat ride takes approximately 2h30 each way)

PLAZA SUR (SOUTH PLAZA) ISLAND

One of the main characteristics of this island is its unusual fauna and vegetation which includes: a colony of Galapagos land iguanas found over parts of the small island; the Opuntia Cacti and the colourful Sesuvium plants. The sheer cliffs of the southern shore are an unparalleled bird observatory and the perfect habitat for several seabirds, including blue-footed boobies, pelicans, swallow-tailed gulls, and the very colourful, red-billed tropic birds.

SANTA FE (BARRINGTON) ISLAND

Santa Fe has one of the most beautiful bays of all the visitor sites in the Galapagos. It boasts a turquoise-colour cove protected by a narrow peninsula that extends along the northern shore. The sandy beaches are often covered with colonies of Galapagos sea-lions. A marked rocky trail leads to the interior and cliffside areas where the Santa Fe endemic species of land iguana can be found within a very picturesque forest of Opuntia or prickly-pear Cacti.

SEYMOUR NORTE (NORTH SEYMOUR) ISLAND

Flatter than other islands, North Seymour is one of the few islands uplifted by underground seismic activity. This Island is one of the best places to see blue-footed boobies nesting on the flat rocky areas near the coast. Visitors will find one of the largest colonies of Magnificent Frigate birds. During the mating season, an explosion of bright red pouches inflated by male frigates to attract females provides some of the most spectacular sights in the Galapagos.

SAN CRISTOBAL ISLAND

A visit to San Cristobal includes: the Interpretation Center a place to learn about the natural history of the Islands; La Loberia, located 10 minutes from Puerto Baquerizo Moreno where a big colony of sea lions is usually lying on the beach; Cerro Tijeretas a small hill with a beautiful view of the islands and habitat of frigate birds; Punta Carola where visitors can observe marine birds, a big colony of sea lions and marine iguanas lying on the rocks.

(Note: this visit includes transfers to and from San Cristobal Island on board public boats; the boat ride takes approximately 2h30 each way)

PINZON ISLAND

It is an uninhabited island with an area of 18 km² and a maximum altitude of 458 meters. It has no visitor or tourist sites, as it is mainly a diving or snorkelling site, offering opportunities to observe the beautiful wildlife, and allowing to have a closer look of the marine life. Pinzon is home to giant tortoises, sea lions, marine iguanas, dolphins, eels, eagle rays, dolphins and even lobster, among other endemic species.

Overnight in Santa Cruz Island at selected hotel

Meals included: breakfast and light lunch onboard (meals do not include beverages)

Day 13: 13 May 23, Sat: Santa Cruz Island- Half day navigation excursion – BAY TOUR (AM)

AM: At proper time we will take a course to the pier of Puerto Ayora to have a navigable route through the Bay of Santa Cruz. The excursion includes a visit to La Loberia, a small island where we

will be able to swim and to make superficial diving next to the sea lions, the Love Channel, the Channel of the Sharks, the Cracks, and the Beach of the Dogs. You can enjoy the observation of sharks, sea lions, blue-footed boobies, iguanas, and rays among other species.

*This excursion is provided on sharing basis and do not include transfers to/from hotel to dock or meeting point, due that distances are very short (5-8 minutes far away from the hotel). Our guide will contact passengers the night before to give you details and times for next day's excursion. If you require a transfer, please request it at an additional cost.

Afternoon at leisure to enjoy your last day in the Enchanted Islands of Galapagos

Overnight in Santa Cruz Island at selected hotel

Meals included: breakfast

Day 14: 14 May 23, Sun: Santa Cruz Island- Baltra airport- Guayaquil or Quito

At the scheduled time transfer from the hotel in Puerto Ayora to the airport located at Baltra Island to take the flight back to mainland Ecuador

Upon arrival to Quito or Guayaquil transfer to the selected hotel

Overnight in Quito or Guayaquil at selected hotel

Meals included: breakfast

Day 15: 15 May 23, Mon: Depart Guayaquil

Breakfast at the hotel and check out.

At the appropriate time transfer to the airport for your departure flight.

Service ends